I want to thank Rev. Kathy Clark for the opportunity to be a part of the Listening & Dialogue session on Saturday, February 6, 2010, with the recently elected General Minister and President, Rev. Geoffrey Black, of the United Church of Christ (UCC) as he continues a ten stop national listening tour visiting UCC conferences around the United States. "How is God calling us to better shape the United Church of Christ with an expectation that God's spirit is moving among us?" Rev. Black questioned.

Rev. Black challenged the region's Theology Among the People (TAP) students and facilitators to envision the "church in the future, rather than simply the future of the church." Thinking of the church in the future will necessitate that we anticipate the future of our society and then reflect upon the role of the church as a Spiritual leader positioned to be of service to a justice seeking society, allowing potential paradigm shifts to meet the changing spiritual, personal and community needs of our present and future society. This shift from the needs of the church in the future enables the church membership to sift through historical and cultural constructs to determine what needs to be carried forward into the future as our foundation representing the "heart" of UCC.

Words I jotted in the margins of my notes (passion, honoring, heart, hope, healing, affirming, transformation, vision, social justice, history) reflected the sense I received from comments being shared from the students and facilitators, as well as Rev. Black, that the UCC of the future would indeed continue to reflect these values to the world. In addition, that the UCC is an important voice in our country.

In addition, the dialogue engaged our "moral imagination", awakening a sense of '…our capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not exist. It engaged us "to meet the challenges of the future; to ignite a passion for honoring and affirming the gifts of diversity, and to proliferate a sense of compassionate co-sharing of the responsibility for spiritual, social, cultural; and economic well being of our communities, nation, and world."

We pondered the questions of -- Who we are as the UCC and what do we, as the UCC, believe? Concluding that perhaps the answer is in the "action" -- what we did, what we are doing, and what we envision ourselves doing in the future. It is rooted in a deep abiding faith that engages the Christ within, enabling us to celebrate our capacity to be just, loving, Christ like, children of God, fully aware that God is still speaking.

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